

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

PATRICIA MARIE GUTIERREZ,

Plaintiff,

v.

MICHELLE KING,  
COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL  
SECURITY,<sup>1</sup>

Defendant.

Case No. 1:23-cv-01295-HBK<sup>2</sup>

ORDER GRANTING AWARD AND  
PAYMENT OF ATTORNEYS FEES UNDER  
THE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT

(Doc. No. 20)

Pending before the Court is the parties' stipulated motion for award of attorney's fees filed on February 10, 2025. (Doc. No. 20). The parties agree to an award of attorney's fees and expenses to Plaintiff's attorney, Francesco P. Benavides of the Law Offices of Francesco Benavides, in the amount of \$8,000.00 in attorney fees and expenses, pursuant to the Equal Access to Justice Act ("EAJA"), 28 U.S.C. § 2412. (*Id.*).

On February 3, 2025, this Court remanded the case pursuant to sentence four of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) to the Commissioner for further administrative proceedings. (Doc. No. 18). Judgment

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<sup>1</sup> The Court has substituted Michelle King, who has been appointed the Acting Commissioner of Social Security, as the defendant in this suit. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 25(d).

<sup>2</sup> Both parties have consented to the jurisdiction of a magistrate judge in accordance with 28 U.S.C. §636(c)(1). (Doc. No. 10).

1 was entered the same day. (Doc. No. 19). Plaintiff now requests an award of fees as the  
 2 prevailing party. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2412(a) & (d)(1)(A); Fed. R. Civ. P. 54(d)(1); *see* 28 U.S.C. §  
 3 1920; *cf. Shalala v. Schaefer*, 509 U.S. 292, 300-02 (1993) (concluding that a party who wins a  
 4 sentence-four remand order under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) is a prevailing party). The Commissioner  
 5 does not oppose the requested relief.

6 The EAJA provides for an award of attorney fees to private litigants who both prevail in  
 7 civil actions (other than tort) against the United States and timely file a petition for fees. 28  
 8 U.S.C. § 2412(d)(1)(A). Under the Act, a court shall award attorney fees to the prevailing party  
 9 unless it finds the government’s position was “substantially justified or that special circumstances  
 10 make such an award unjust.” *Id.* Here, the government did not show its position was  
 11 substantially justified and the Court finds there are not special circumstances that would make an  
 12 award unjust.


13 Based on the stipulation, the Court finds an award of \$8,000.00 in attorney fees and  
 14 expenses is appropriate. EAJA fees, expenses, and costs are subject to any offsets allowed under  
 15 the Treasury Offset Program (“TOP”), as discussed in *Astrue v. Ratliff*, 532 U.S. 1192 (2010). If  
 16 the Commissioner determines upon effectuation of this Order that Plaintiff’s EAJA fees are not  
 17 subject to any offset allowed under the TOP, the fees shall be delivered or otherwise transmitted  
 18 to Plaintiff’s counsel.

19 Accordingly, it is **ORDERED**:

20 1. The stipulated motion for attorney fees and expenses (Doc. No. 20) is **GRANTED**.

21 2. The Commissioner is directed to pay to Plaintiff as the prevailing party EAJA fees in  
 22 the amount of \$8,000.00 in attorney fees and expenses. Unless the Department of Treasury  
 23 determines that Plaintiff owes a federal debt, the government shall make payment of the EAJA  
 24 fees to Plaintiff’s counsel, Francesco P. Benavides of the Law Offices of Francesco Benavides, in  
 25 accordance with Plaintiff’s assignment of fees and subject to the terms of the stipulated motion.

26 Dated: February 11, 2025

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 28 HELENA M. BARCH-KUCHTA  
 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE